

Latgalian language

Latgalian (*latgalīšu volūda*, [Latvian](#): *latgaliešu valoda*) is an Eastern Baltic language spoken in [Latgale](#), the eastern part of Latvia. It is debated whether it is a separate language with heavy Latvian influence, due to historical mutual exposure, or a distinct Eastern dialect of [Latvian](#).^[4] Nevertheless, its [standardized](#) form is recognized and protected as a "historical variety of the [Latvian language](#)" (*vēsturisks latviešu valodas paveids*) according to [Latvian Language Law](#).^[5] The 2011 Latvian census established that 8.8% of Latvia's inhabitants, or 164,500 people, speak Latgalian daily. 97,600 of them live in Latgale, 29,400 in [Riga](#) and 14,400 in the Riga region.^[6]

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History

Originally [Latgaliens](#) were a tribe living in modern [Vidzeme](#) and [Latgale](#). It is thought that they spoke the [Latvian language](#), which later spread through the rest of modern [Latvia](#), absorbing features of the [Old Curonian](#), [Semigallian](#), [Selonian](#) and [Livonian](#) languages. The Latgale area became politically separated during the [Polish–Swedish wars](#), remaining part of the [Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](#) as the [Inflanty Voivodeship](#), while the rest of Latvians lived in lands dominated by [Baltic German](#) nobility. Both centuries of separate development and the influence of different [prestige languages](#) likely contributed to the development of modern Latgalian as distinct from the language spoken in [Vidzeme](#) and other parts of Latvia.

Latgalian Eastern Latvian	
	latgalīšu volūda
Native to	Latvia, Russia
Region	Latgalia, Selonia, Vidzeme, Siberia, Bashkiriya
Native speakers	150,000–200,000 (2009) ^[1]
Language family	Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balto-Slavic ▪ Baltic ▪ Eastern Baltic ▪ Latvian ▪ Latgalian Eastern Latvian
Writing system	Latin script (Latgalian alphabet) ^[2]
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	ltg
Glottolog	east2282 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/east2282) ^[3]
Linguasphere	54-AAB-ad Latgale

The modern Latgalian literary tradition started to develop in the 18th century from vernaculars spoken by Latvians in the eastern part of Latvia. The first surviving book published in Latgalian is "Evangelia toto anno" (*Gospels for the whole year*) in 1753. The first systems of orthography were borrowed from Polish and used Antiqua letters. It was very different from the German-influenced orthography, usually written in Blackletter or Gothic script, used for the Latvian language in the rest of Latvia. Many Latgalian books in late 18th and early 19th century were authored by Jesuit priests, who came from various European countries to Latgale as the north-eastern outpost of the Roman Catholic religion; their writings included religious literature, calendars and poetry.

Publishing books in the Latgalian language along with the Lithuanian was forbidden from 1865 to 1904. The ban on using Latin letters in this part of the Russian Empire followed immediately after the January Uprising, where Polish insurgents in Poland, and also in Lithuania and Latgale, challenged the czarist rule. During the ban, only a limited number of smuggled Catholic religious texts and some hand-written literature was available, e.g. calendars written by the self-educated peasant Andryvs Jūrdžys.

After the repeal of the ban in 1904 there was a quick rebirth of the Latgalian literary tradition; first newspapers, textbooks and grammars appeared. In 1918 Latgale became part of the newly created Latvian state. From 1920 to 1934 the two literary traditions of Latvians developed in parallel. A notable achievement during this period was the original translation of the New Testament into Latgalian by the priest and scholar Aloizis Broks, published in Aglona in 1933. After the coup staged by Kārlis Ulmanis in 1934, the subject of the Latgalian dialect was removed from the school curriculum and was invalidated for use in state institutions; this was as part of an effort to standardize Latvian language usage. Latgalian survived as a spoken language during the Soviet annexation of Latvia (1940–1991) while printed literature in Latgalian virtually ceased between 1959 and 1989. Some Latgalian intellectuals in emigration continued to publish books and studies of the Latgalian language, most notably Mikejs Bukss, see bibliography (<http://www.imm.i.se/kultur/authors/letter/bukss.htm>).

Since the restoration of Latvian independence there has been a noticeable increase of interest in the Latgalian language and cultural heritage. It is taught as an optional subject in some universities; in Rēzekne the Publishing House of Latgalian Culture Centre (*Latgales kultūras centra izdevniecība*) led by Jānis Elksnis, prints both old and new books in Latgalian.

In 1992, Juris Cibuls together with Lidija Leikuma published one of the first Latgalian Alphabet books after the restoration of the language.

In the 21st century the Latgalian language has become more visible in Latvia's cultural life. Apart from its preservation movements, Latgalian can be more often heard in different interviews on the national TV channels, and there are modern rock groups such as Borowa MC and Dabas Durovys singing in Latgalian who have had moderate success also throughout the country. Today, Latgalian is also found in written form in public signs, such as some street names and shop signs,^[7] evidences of growing use in the linguistic landscape.



Distribution of the Baltic tribes, circa AD 1200 (boundaries are approximate).

Classification

Latgalian is a member of the [Eastern Baltic](#) branch of the [Baltic](#) group of languages included in the family of [Indo-European languages](#). The branch also includes [Latvian](#), [Samogitian](#) and [Lithuanian](#). Latgalian is a moderately [inflected](#) language; the number of [verb](#) and [noun](#) forms is characteristic of many other [Baltic](#) and [Slavic languages](#) (see [Inflection in Baltic Languages](#)).

Geographic distribution

Latgalian is spoken by about 150,000 people,^[8] mainly in [Latgale](#), [Latvia](#); there are small Latgalian-speaking communities in [Russia](#), [Siberia](#).



Use of Latgalian in everyday communication in Latvia (2011)

Official status

Between 1920 and 1934 Latgalian was used in local government and education in [Latgale](#). Now Latgalian is not used as an official language anywhere in Latvia. It is formally protected by the [Latvian Language Law](#) stating that "The Latvian State ensures the preservation, protection and development of the Latgalian literary language as a historical variant of the Latvian language" (§3.4).^[5] There is a state-supported orthography commission of the Latgalian language. Whether the Latgalian language is a separate language or a [dialect](#) of [Latvian](#) has been a matter of heated debate throughout the 20th century. Proponents of Latgalian such as linguists Antons Breidaks and Lidijs Leikuma have suggested Latgalian has the characteristics of an independent language. Officially Latgalian is considered a variety of Latvian, meaning that Latvian language has two different written standards - Latvian and Latgalian.

Dialects

Latgalian speakers can be classified into three main groups – Northern, Central and Southern. These three groups of local accents are entirely [mutually intelligible](#) and characterized only by minor changes in vowels, diphthongs and some inflection endings. The regional accents of central Latgale (such as those spoken in the towns and rural municipalities of Juosmuiža, Vuorkova, Vydsmuiža, Vilāni, Sakstygols, Ūzulaine, Makašāni, Drycāni, Gaigalova, Bierži, Tilža and Nautrāni) form the phonetical basis of the modern standard Latgalian language. The literature of the 18th century was more influenced by the Southern accents of Latgalian.

Alphabet

The Latgalian language uses an alphabet with 35 letters. Its orthography is similar to [Latvian orthography](#), but has two additional letters: ⟨y⟩ represents [i̯], an allophone of /i/ which is absent in standard Latvian. The letter ⟨ō⟩ survives from the pre-1957 Latvian orthography.

Alphabet

Upper case	Lower case	Pronunciation
A	a	/a/
Ā	ā	/a:/
B	b	/b/
C	c	/tʃ/
Č	č	/tʃ/
D	d	/d/
E	e	/ɛ/
Ē	ē	/ɛ:/
F	f	/f/
G	g	/g/
Ğ	ğ	/g ɟ/
H	h	/χ/
I	i	/i/
Y	y	/ɛ/
Ī	ī	/i:/
J	j	/j/
K	k	/k/
Ķ	ķ	/k ɟ/
L	l	/l/
Ļ	ļ	/l ɟ/
M	m	/m/
N	n	/n/
Ņ	ņ	/n ɟ/
O	o	/ɔ/
Ō	ō	/ɔ:/
P	p	/p/
R	r	/r/
S	s	/s/
Š	š	/ʃ/
T	t	/t/
U	u	/u/
Ū	ū	/u:/
V	v	/v/
Z	z	/z/

Language examples

Poem of Armands Kūceņš

Tik skrytuļam ruodīs: iz vītys jis grīžās,
A brauciejam breinums, kai tuoli ceļš aizvess,
Tai vuorpsteite cīši pret sprāduoju paušās,
Jei naattein – vacei gi dzejis gols zvaigznēs.

Pruots naguorbej ramu, juos lepneibu grūžoj,
Vys jamās pa sovam ļauds pasauli puormeit,
Bet nak jau sev kuram vīns kuorsynoj myužu
I ramaņu jumtus līk īguodu kuormim.

Na vysim tai sadar kai kuošam ar speini,
Sirds narymst i nabeidz par sāt malim tēmēt,
A pruots rauga skaitejs pa rokstaudža zeimem,
Kai riedeits, kod saulei vēl vaiņuku jēme.

Lord's Prayer

Tāvs myusu, kas esi debesīs,
svēteits lai tūp Tovs vōrds.
Lai atnōk Tova valsteiba.
Tova vala lai nūteik, kai debesīs,
tai ari vērs zemes.
Myusu ikdīneišķū maizi dūd mums šudiņ.
Un atlaid mums myusu porōdus,
kai ari mes atlaižam sovim porōdnīkim.
Un naīved myusu kārdynōšonā,
bet izglōb myusus nu ļauna Amen.

Phrasebook

Phrases

Latgalian	Latvian	Meaning
Vasals!	Sveiks!	Hi! (literally, "Hale and Hearty!", "Sveiks" is more common as "Hi" in Latvian but has a different meaning)
Loba dīna!	Labdien!	Hello, Good day!
Muns vuords Eugeņs.	Mans vārds ir Eugeņs.	My name is Eugene.
Šudiņ breineiga dīna!	Šodien ir brīnišķīga diena!	Today is a wonderful/beautiful day!
Vīns, div, treis, niu tu breivs!	Viens, divi, trīs, nu tu esi brīvs!	One, two, three, now you are free! (Counting game for children)
Asu aizjimts itamā Šaltī!	Esmu aizņemts šobrīd!	I am busy at the moment!
Es tevi mīloju!	Es tevi mīlu!	I love you!
Asu nu Latgolys.	Esmu no Latgales.	I am from Latgalia.
As ūsu iz sātu.	Es iešu mājās.	I will go home. (Note, "sēta" in Latvian means the courtyard to a homestead, also homestead; so a more rural/agrarian sense of "home" in the Latgalian than in the Latvian "mājas", which is more evocative of a house.)
Man pateik vuiceitīs. (moceitīs).	Man patīk mācīties.	I like to learn. (Note, this marked difference between Latgalian and Latvian is quite typical. The set of examples here are quite similar because they relate to basic concepts.)

Common words in Latgalian and Lithuanian, different from Latvian

Note the impact of foreign influences on Latvian (German in Kurzeme and Vidzeme, Polish, Lithuanian in Latgale).

English	Latvian	Latgalian	Lithuanian	Comments
around	apkārt	aplek	aplink	<i>aplinkus</i> in Latvian means "indirectly"
always	vienmēr	vysod	visad(a)	
everyday-	īkdienas-	kasdīnys-	kasdienis	
he	viņš, šis	jis	jis	
urgent	steidzams	skubeigs	skubus	<i>skubīgs</i> has the same meaning in Latvian, but is rarely used
to interrogate, to ask	taujāt, izjautāt	klaust	klausti, klausinēti	<i>klausīties</i> in Latvian is "to listen"; <i>klaū!</i> means "hey!"; <i>klaūšināt</i> means to ask several people
girl, maid	meita, meitene	mārga	mergina, merga	<i>meita</i> in Latvian is used more often as "daughter" while <i>meitene</i> means "girl" exclusively
kerchief	lakatiņš	skareņa	skarelē	
dress, frock	kleita	sukne	suknelē	<i>kleita</i> in Latvian is adapted from the German <i>das Kleid</i> , any native term has been lost. Latgalian and Lithuanian - comp. Polish <i>suknia</i> .
top, apical	galotne, virsotne	viersyune	viršūnē	
pillar, column	stabs	stulps	stulpas	<i>stulpiņi</i> (diminutive, plural for "stulps") in Latvian is preserved as "leggings"
to read	lasīt	skaiteit	skaityti	<i>skaitīt</i> in Latvian means to count, <i>noskaitīt</i> is to recite
to come	nākt	atīt	ateiti	<i>atīt</i> in Latvian means to depart (the root word "iet" means "to go")
row, range, line	rinda	aīļa	eilē	<i>aīle</i> in Latvian means row in very narrow sense - it refers to space between two lines
to sit down	apsēsties	atsasēst	atsisēsti	
to answer	atbildēt	atsaceit	atsakyti	<i>atsacīt</i> in Latvian means to reject, refuse (and to do it quickly and sharply), <i>atsakyti</i> can be used with this meaning in Lithuanian too
to torture	mocīt	kомуот	kamuoti	
to die (about animals)	nosprāgt	nūgaist	nugaišti	
to squeeze	maidzīt	maidzeit	maigyt	
to catch a cold	saaukstēties	puorsaļt	peršalti	<i>pārsalt</i> in Latvian means to freeze overly (near death)
cold	auksts	solts	šaltis	<i>auksts</i> is more common in Latvian for "cold" than "salts" which is a chilling cold
mistake	kļūda	klaida	klaida	
page	lappuse	puslopa	puslapis	compound word, in Latvian the order is "leaf"+"side", reverse of the order in Latgalian and Lithuanian
down, downward	lejup	zamyn	žemyn	<i>zemu</i> in Latvian means "low"
and, also	un	i	ir	<i>un</i> and <i>arī</i> are common usage in Latvian, "i" is archaic found mainly in folk songs and poetry
to settle in	iekārtoties	īsataiseit	īsikurti	

family	ģimene	saime	šeima	"ģimene" is used in Latvian for the core family, <i>saime</i> denotes extended family and household, for example, <i>saimnieks</i> , <i>saimniece</i> are master and mistress, respectively, of the household while in Lithuanian it is <i>giminė</i> which is used for extended family
homeland	tēvzeme	tāvaine	tēvynē	
east	austrumi	reiti	rytai	"rīti" is less common, poetic form in Latvian
west	rietumi	vokori	vakarai	"vakari" is less common, poetic form in Latvian
to stand up	piecelties	atsastuot	atsistoti	
to sore	sūrstēt	pierkšēt	perštēti	
scissors	šķēres	zirklis	žirklēs	Šķēres in Latvian is adapted from the German <i>die Schere</i> , <i>dzirkles</i> refers to shears
to forgive	piedot	atlaist	atleisti	
owl	pūce	palāda	pelēda	
toad	krupis	rupucs	rupūžē	
fear	bailes	baime	baimē	
last name, surname	uzvārds	pavuorde	pavardē	
smith	kalējs	kalvs	kalvis	
to clatter	rībēt, skrabēt	brazdēt	brazdēti	
to perish	iet bojā	propuļt	prapulti	
on horseback	jāšus	raitu	raitas	
inside	iekšā	vydā	viduj	
to notice	ievērot	ītiemēt	īsidēmēti	
a little	mazliet	drupeiti	truputj	
to bore, to become boring	apnikt	atbuost, atsabuost	atsibosti	
to undress	noģērbties	nūsavījkt	nusirengti	
swamp	dumbrājs, muklājs	liuņs	liūnas	
kidney	niere	eiksts	inkstas	
to poke	bakstīt	badeit	badyti	
to hover	plivināties apkārt	laksteit	lakstyti	
to bathe	peldēties	mauduotīs	maudytis	
clover	āboliņš	duobuls	dobilas	
first of all	vispirms	pyrma	visų pirma	
suddenly	pēkšņi	ūmai	ūmai	
to stretch (oneself)	staipīties, gorīties	rūzeitīs	rāžytis	
to detect	uziet,	aptikt	aptikti	

	konstatēt			
to snatch	pakampt	sačupt	sučiupti	
to grope	taustīties	čupinētīs	čiupinētis	
church holiday	baznīcas svētki	atlaidys	atlaidai	
variable (dates)	mainīgi (datumi)	cylojamuos (dīnys)	kilnojamos (dienos)	
remotely	attālu	atostai	atstu	
to make faces	vaikstīties	šaipeitīs	vaipyti	
to shell	lobīt	galdeit	gliaudyt	
to thresh (by beating)	kult (dauzot)	bluokšt	blokšti	
to break (about glass)	plīst (par stiklu)	dyuzt	dūžti	

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8. UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/>) (Select "Latvia" in the drop-down *Country or area* menu and then "Latgalian language" from the drop-down suggestion list in the *Language* field.).

External links

- [Latvian–Latgalian Dictionary](http://www.vuordineica.lv) (<http://www.vuordineica.lv>)
- Sanita Lazdiņa, Heiko F. Marten: *Latgalian in Latvia: A Continuous Struggle for Political Recognition*. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20171011135937/http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2012/LazdinaMarten.pdf>) In: *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*
- [The Two Literary Traditions of Latvians](http://www.vvk.lv/index.php?sadala=142&id=762) (<http://www.vvk.lv/index.php?sadala=142&id=762>)

- [Some facts about Latgalian language](https://web.archive.org/web/20090723172309/http://geocities.com/latgalian/) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090723172309/http://geocities.com/latgalian/>)
- [The Grammar of Latgalian Language \(in Latvian, PDF document\)](http://www.genling.nw.ru/balist/Publicat/LatgVol1.pdf) (<http://www.genling.nw.ru/balist/Publicat/LatgVol1.pdf>)

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